

Dear Editor:

On Dec. 13 the Times-Picayune ran a story about an Inspector General report under the headline “Louisiana flunks at enforcing air, water laws, EPA inspector general says.” The report and the subsequent Picayune coverage provided false and misleading information to the citizens of the state. I have addressed a few of these in a letter to the Inspector General. I’m limited by space here, but the entire letter can be read at www.deq.louisiana.gov.

Here are a few examples of what is not accounted for in the report:

- ambient air and water quality is the best it has ever been, as realized by EPA.
- 14,454 enforcement actions (e.g., Notices of Deficiency, Notices of Violation, and Warning Letters) taken by LDEQ, but not tracked by EPA;
- 18,521 facility assessments conducted after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 and Gustav and Ike in 2008;
- the fact that EPA’s enforcement database does not count inspections or enforcement penalties issued to non-permitted facilities;
- EPA’s reduction in its major facility inspection goal from 100 percent to 50 percent in 2006 such that additional resources could be focused on minor sources;
- differences in state permitting programs which drastically impact the number of sources an agency has to permit, inspect, and enforce.

Sincerely,

Peggy Hatch

Secretary DEQ